



WORKPLACE SAFETY AND HEALTH IN NEBRASKA

*From The
National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health*



State Profile 2002

*Delivering on the Nation's promise:
Safety and health at work for all people through prevention.*

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health

NIOSH is the primary federal agency responsible for conducting research and making recommendations for the prevention of work-related illness and injury. NIOSH is located in the Department of Health and Human Services in the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The NIOSH mission is to provide national and world leadership to prevent work-related illness, injury, disability, and death by gathering information, conducting scientific research, and translating the knowledge gained into products and services. As part of its mission, NIOSH supports programs in every state to improve the health and safety of workers. NIOSH has developed this document to highlight recent NIOSH programs important to workers and employers in Nebraska.

The Burden of Occupational Illness and Injury in Nebraska

- In Nebraska, there are approximately 897,000 individuals employed in the workforce.¹
- In 2000, 59 workers died as a result of workplace injuries.²
- The agriculture, forestry, and fishing industry had the highest number of fatalities, followed second by construction, and third by transportation and public utilities.²
- In 1999, the most recent year for which data are available, the rate of fatal workplace injuries was 7.2 deaths per 100,000 workers – above the national average rate of 4.5 deaths per 100,000 workers.²
- In 2000, there were 40,800 nonfatal workplace injuries and illnesses in Nebraska.³

The Cost of Occupational Injury and Illness in Nebraska

In 2000, the most recent year for which data are available, a total of \$186.2 million was paid for workers' compensation claims by Nebraska private insurers and self-insured employers.⁴ This figure does not include compensation paid to workers employed by the federal government and also underestimates the total financial burden for private sector businesses, since only a fraction of health care costs and earnings lost through work injuries and illnesses is covered by workers' compensation. Chronic occupational illnesses like cancer are substantially under-reported in workers' compensation systems because work-relatedness is often difficult to establish.

How NIOSH Prevents Worker Injuries and Diseases in Nebraska

Health Hazard Evaluations (HHEs) and Technical Assistance

NIOSH evaluates workplace hazards and recommends solutions when requested by employers, workers, or state or federal agencies. Since 1993, NIOSH has responded to 23 requests for HHEs in Nebraska in a variety of industrial settings, including the following example:

Freemont, Nebraska: Ozone Exposure Among Beef Processing Workers

In 1999, NIOSH responded to a request for an HHE by the management of a beef processing company in Freemont, Nebraska. There was concern that workers were exposed to ozone during research and development procedures for a new sanitation treatment process for raw beef. NIOSH investigators determined that the ozone generator is capable of producing high concentrations of ozone and recommended that when ozone concentrations are above applicable occupational exposure criteria, workers use supplied-air respirators. Subsequent to the NIOSH investigation, management at the beef processing company decided to terminate the research and development testing procedures and not utilize ozone to kill bacteria in beef products at the plant in the future.

Fatality Assessment and Control Evaluation (FACE) Investigations

NIOSH developed the FACE program to identify work situations with a high risk of fatality and to formulate and disseminate prevention strategies. In Nebraska, FACE is conducted by the state's Department of Labor under a cooperative agreement with NIOSH. Since 1995, there have been 48 FACE investigations in Nebraska, including the following recent example:

Nebraska: Worker Crushed by Tanker

On March 3, 2000, a 50-year-old feed lot manager was killed when he was crushed between the top of a tanker and an overhead steel beam. The FACE investigator concluded that, to prevent future similar occurrences, employers should: ensure the manufacturer's load limits are not exceeded when using equipment; and develop, implement, and enforce a comprehensive safety program that includes, but is not limited to, training in all hazard identification, avoidance, and abatement.

Building State Capacity

State-Based Surveillance

NIOSH funds the Adult Blood Lead Epidemiology and Surveillance Program (ABLES) in the Nebraska System of Health and Human Services. Through ABLES, the agency's staff track and respond to cases of excessive lead exposures in adults which can cause a variety of adverse health outcomes such as kidney or nervous system damage and potential infertility.

Additional information regarding NIOSH services and activities can be accessed through the NIOSH home page at <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/homepage.html> or by calling the NIOSH 800-number at 1-800-356-NIOSH (1-800-356-4674).

¹U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), Local Area Unemployment Statistics, Current Population Survey, 2000.

²DOL, BLS in cooperation with state and federal agencies, Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries, 1999-2000.

³DOL, BLS in cooperation with participating state agencies, Survey of Occupational Injuries and Illnesses, 2000.

⁴National Academy of Social Insurance, *Workers' Compensation: Benefits, Coverage, and Costs, 2000 New Estimates*, May 2002.

